ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
HELLENIC REPUBLIC

Accreditation Report

for the New Postgraduate Study Programme of:

Career Counselling and Lifelong Education

Department: Educational Sciences and Social Work
Institution: University of Patras
Date: 26/10/2024

Report of the Panel appointed by the HAHE to undertake the review of the New Postgraduate Study Programme of **Career Counselling and Lifelong Education** of the **University of Patras** for the purposes of granting accreditation.

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PART A: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE REVIEW

I.   The External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

The Panel responsible for the Accreditation Review of the new postgraduate study programme of **Career Counselling and Lifelong Education** of the **University of Patras** comprised the following five (5) members, drawn from the HAHE Register, in accordance with Laws 4009/2011 & 4653/2020:

1. **Prof. Vostanis Panos** (Chair)
    University of Leicester, United Kingdom

2. **Prof. Emeritus Gagatsis Athanasios**
    University of Cyprus, Cyprus

3. **Prof. Emerita Katsarou Eleni**
    University of Illinois at Chicago, United States of America

4. **Assoc. Prof. Emerita Valavanidou-Ioannitou Georgia (Gina)**
    Le Mans Université, France

5. **Mr. Boumpourekas Konstantinos, PhD Candidate**
    University of Western Macedonia, Greece

II.   Review Procedure and Documentation

In preparation for the review of the Postgraduate Study Programme of Career Counselling and Lifelong Education (CCLE) of the University of Patras (UoP), the members of the External Evaluation and Accreditation Panel (EEAP) examined the documents provided in advance by HAHE, including the Department's Proposal for Accreditation of the Postgraduate Programme, the Guide of Studies, the HAHE Guidelines and other relevant information about the proposed Programme (strategic goals, quality indicators, research outputs, several University and Departmental policies, etc.). The EEAP also consulted the website of the Department.

The review was online and took place on Monday 14/12/2024 and Tuesday 15/10/2024. It was preceded by a private meeting of the EEAP on Monday (via Zoom), and it was followed by further private meetings of the EEAP throughout that week to finalise the report. During the virtual visit, the EEAP had the following meetings:

14/10/2024
17.00 – 18.00: Meeting with Professor Christos Bouras, Rector; Professor Ioannis Venetis, Vice-Rector and Director of Quality Assurance MODIP; Professor Georgios Nikolaou, Vice-Head of Department of Educational Sciences and Social Work; and Professor Stephanos Vassilopoulos, Programme Director. The Programme Director gave an overview of the proposed PSP.

15/10/2024
15.00 – 15.45: Meeting with Teaching Staff members (DEP) and Adjunct Teaching Staff for the PSP: Professor Iosif Fragkoulis, School of Pedagogical and Technological Education, ASPETE; Professor Kallia Kounenou, School of Pedagogical and Technological Education, ASPETE; Assistant Professor Ioannis Laliotis; Mr Stephanos Armakolas, Special Teaching Staff (EDIP); Mrs Athina Raftopoulou, Appointed Teaching Staff; and Mrs Panagoula Papadimitropoulou, Appointed Teaching Staff. The EEAP discussed teaching and staff issues, workload, delivery approaches, student evaluation, links between teaching and research, learning materials, equipment and resources.

17.15 – 18.00: Meeting with external stakeholders, i.e., Mr Phillipos Poulastidis, GSEE Employment Institute; Mr George Pappas George, President of the Economic Chamber of Northwestern Peloponnese and Western Greece; and Mr Panagiotis Tsoumanis, Career and Employment Counsellor. The stakeholders discussed with EEAP members various forms and opportunities of collaboration with the Programme, involvement in the formulation of the proposal, and the current state of the career counselling and lifelong education field.

18.00 – 18.30: Debrief meeting of EEAP members, in which they discussed the outcomes of the virtual visit and prepared the interim oral report.

18.30 – 18.50: Closure meeting with the Vice-Rector/MODIP Director, Head of Department, Programme Director and Mrs Fieroula Papadatou, MODIP Manager. In this final meeting, the EEAP provided a general view of some of the conclusions reached.

The EEAP members want to underline that all the above meetings were held in a very constructive atmosphere. Overall, the Department and staff programme with presentations and discussions. All members of the Programme were ready and eager to answer the questions by the EEAP, and this facilitated the latter's task in the evaluation and accreditation process.

III.   Postgraduate Study Programme Profile

The Postgraduate Study Programme in Counselling and Lifelong Education aims at providing specialisation, theoretical and applied knowledge, evidence-base and competencies to graduates from various disciplines, who are providing or aim to provide individual or organisational career counselling. As there is an increasing trend of multiple career changes across professionals' career life, the proposed PSP will integrate career counselling with lifelong education, to equip students in emerging human resources and labour market demands.

In particular, students will be equipped with knowledge and competencies in evaluation, design and implementation of individual and organisational career counselling programmes. The curriculum covers a wide spectrum of topics, including career counselling and lifelong education frameworks, psychometric assessment, management of human resources, inclusion and support of vulnerable groups, programme evaluation, application of new technologies, and research methods. In order to provide interdisciplinary teaching across different fields by tapping into academic staff expertise, the Department of Educational Sciences and Social Work collaborates with the Department of Economic Sciences.

The Programme operates within the framework of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), which quantifies academic workload. The complete cost of the Postgraduate Programme amounts to 2.700€, reflecting the total number of 90 required credit units. Teaching is provided in the Greek language, although applicants are expected to have good knowledge of English language, in order to access the bibliography and other learning materials. They also have the option of writing up their dissertation in English. The student projection is up to 30 students for the first cohort, and up to 100 students annually thereafter.

The Postgraduate Study Programme spans three academic semesters. These include the completion of a thesis and practical training (internship). The first and second semesters consist of five compulsory lessons (also referred to as courses or topics) each (6 ECTS per lesson, or 30 per semester). The third semester involves the completion of a thesis and practical training (15 ECTs each). All lessons are provided face-to-face at the University of Patras. Practical training is provided at a number of listed collaborating settings and is supervised.

Upon successful completion of the PSP, graduates are conferred with a Diploma of Postgraduate Studies in Career Counselling and Lifelong Education. This qualification will equip students with various career opportunities in providing individual and organisational career counselling across different settings in the public and private sector. Additionally, the Programme will prepare graduates for leadership positions. The institution offers high-quality infrastructure for face-to-face and web-based learning.

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES

Principle 1: Strategy, Quality Assurance Policy and Quality Goal Setting for the New Postgraduate Study Programmes

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD INCLUDE IN THEIR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT THE DEVELOPMENT, ORGANISATION, AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES (PSP) IN SPECIFIC SCIENTIFIC FIELDS AFTER INVESTIGATING THEIR FEASIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY.
INSTITUTIONS SHOULD APPLY A QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY FOR THE NEW POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES AS PART OF THEIR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT.
THIS POLICY SHOULD EXPAND AND BE AIMED (WITH THE COLLABORATION OF EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS) AT THE PSP OF THE INSTITUTION AND THE ACADEMIC UNIT. THIS POLICY SHOULD BE PUBLISHED AND IMPLEMENTED BY ALL INTERESTED PARTIES.

By decision/s of the Institutional Senate, the Institutions should adapt their strategy to allow for the provision of postgraduate study programmes, in addition to attending to the profile, vision, mission and strategic objectives of the Institution. In this strategy, the Institutions should anticipate the potential benefits, difficulties or risks from the implementation of new postgraduate study programmes and plan all the necessary actions to achieve their goals. The Institution's strategic choices should be documented through specific feasibility and sustainability studies, especially for new postgraduate study programmes.

In the case of PSP delivered by distance methods, the Institution prepares and applies an e-learning strategy. The Institution's e-learning strategy is integrated into its overall strategy and identifies educational goals while keeping up to the rapid technological changes and to the developments in pedagogical models. The Institution should include in its strategy the justification and feasibility as to why e-learning has been selected as the appropriate learning strategy for the particular programmes of study where it is applied.

In the context of e-learning, innovation strategies, the possibility of programme revision, the linking between learning and research (requiring knowledge of the latest innovations in order to select the most appropriate means to achieve the learning outcomes) should be taken into account.

The quality assurance policy of the academic unit for postgraduate study programmes should be in line with the Institution's strategy and must be formulated in the form of a public statement, which is implemented by all stakeholders. It focuses on the achievement of special goals related to the quality assurance of the postgraduate study programmes offered by the academic unit. Indicatively, the quality policy statement of the academic unit includes its commitment to implement a quality policy that will promote the academic profile and orientation of the postgraduate study programme (PSP), its purpose and field of study; it will realise the programme's goals and it will determine the means and ways for attaining them; it will implement appropriate quality procedures, aiming at the programme's continuous improvement.

In particular, in order to implement this policy, the academic unit commits itself to put into practice quality procedures that will demonstrate:

 a. *the suitability of the structure and organisation of postgraduate study programmes*

 b. *the pursuit of learning outcomes and qualifications in accordance with the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education - level 7*

 c. *the promotion of the quality and effectiveness of teaching at the PSP*

Study Programme Compliance

I.   Findings

Relevant documentation included the Quality Assurance Policy and the Goal Setting Strategy of the PSP. The Quality Assurance Policy outlines the mission of the University of Patras and the Department of Educational Sciences and Social Work, and the PSP in particular, with reference to aims and objectives. The main aims relate to the knowledge, skills and competencies that students and graduates are expected to acquire through the PSP.

The Goal Setting Strategy of the PSP defines specific strategic priorities and quality objectives. The strategic aims defined include the following: upgrading and quality control of the PSP; enhancement of the image and recognition of the PSP; further professional development of staff members; and enhancement of links with external organisations. Moreover, the Goal Setting Strategy outlines specific indicators, present and future targets, actions to be taken to achieve the objectives, responsibilities and timelines. There is scoping of the market, although there is no SWAT analysis as such. Scoping highlights the increasing and diversified labour demands for career counselling, and other Postgraduate Study Programmes with related or overlapping objectives. Interdisciplinarity is considered a strength of the new PSP. The proposed PSP student fees compare favourably with those of other programmes.

These documents are clearly written and provide a solid basis for planning and implementation in relation to achieving quality standards. Overall, the academic unit has established a Quality Assurance Policy that is appropriate for the PSP and serves as a guideline and point of reference for future planning and decision-making.

II.   Analysis

The information outlined in the relevant documents, as well as the information provided by administrators and faculty members, indicates that the academic unit is committed to the

implementation of the Quality Assurance Policy. There is an acknowledgement of the need to make a commitment towards continuous improvement. The role of student feedback and participation is considered important in continuous improvement, as shown by the importance assigned to this strategic aim in the Goal Setting Strategy of the PSP. Moreover, continuous improvement appears to be based on the creation and maintenance of a healthy and collaborative organisational culture.

The goals set by the academic unit follow the SMART framework in that they are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time specific. Quality goals are combined with suitable performance indicators, which creates a framework for relevant planning and initiatives for improvement. These goals will be monitored and updated on a regular basis. Internal processes for quality assurance are used to identify areas for improvement, which are subsequently discussed in meetings.

The specified learning outcomes are in agreement with the European and National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education. The academic unit has demonstrated commitment to the promotion of the quality and effectiveness of teaching, as indicated by departmental actions, policies and initiatives. For instance, this is shown by the fact that the academics recruited and employed on the Programme are highly qualified.

III. Conclusions

The PSP has established a Quality Assurance Policy, which ensures that this will be monitored and evaluated on a systematic basis. The process provides specific directions for improvement, which is considered necessary for further action. It would be important to revisit quality indicators after the first student uptake and adjust accordingly. These could relate to student numbers, staff/student ratio, and practical training and placement needs.

Panel Judgement

Principle 1: Strategy, Quality Assurance Policy and Quality Goal Setting for the New Postgraduate Study Programmes	
Fully compliant	**X**
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations
The EEAP recommends:
- This is a clearly systematically and evidence-based proposal, which fulfils quality assurance criteria at this stage.

- A more detailed SWOT analysis would inform planning and monitoring.
- It would be useful to consider practical training and placement needs, as well as staff/student ratio, at the end of the first academic year (second semester) of the first student cohort.

Principle 2: Design and Approval of New Postgraduate Study Programmes

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD DEVELOP THEIR POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES FOLLOWING A DEFINED WRITTEN PROCESS WHICH WILL INVOLVE THE PARTICIPANTS, INFORMATION SOURCES AND THE APPROVAL COMMITTEES FOR THE NEW POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES. THE OBJECTIVES, THE SPECIFIC SCIENTIFIC SUBJECT AND THE STREAMS OR SPECIALISATIONS, THE EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND THE EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS ARE SET OUT IN THE PROGRAMME DESIGN. DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES, THE DEGREE OF ACHIEVEMENT OF THE LEARNING OUTCOMES SHOULD BE ASSESSED. THE ABOVE DETAILS, AS WELL AS INFORMATION ON THE PROGRAMME'S STRUCTURE ARE PUBLISHED IN THE STUDENT GUIDE.

The academic units develop their postgraduate study programmes following a well-defined procedure. The academic profile and orientation of the programme, the research character, the scientific objectives, the specific subject areas, the specialisations, the expected learning outcomes, the structure, the courses, the teaching and assessment modes, the teaching staff and the necessary resources are described at this stage.

The structure, content and organisation of courses and teaching methods should be oriented towards deepening knowledge and acquiring the corresponding skills to apply the said knowledge (e.g. course on research methodology, participation in research projects, thesis with a research component).

The expected learning outcomes must be determined based on the European and National Qualifications Framework (EQF, NQF), and the Dublin Descriptors for level 7. During the implementation of the programme, the degree of achievement of the expected learning outcomes and the feedback of the learning process must be assessed with the appropriate tools. In particular, for each expected learning outcome that is designed and made public, it is necessary that its evaluation criteria are also designed and made public.

In addition, the design of PSP must consider:

- *the Institutional strategy*
- *the active involvement of students*
- *the experience of external stakeholders from the labour market*
- *the anticipated student workload according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) for level 7*
- *the option of providing work experience to students*
- *the linking of teaching and research*
- *the relevant regulatory framework and the official procedure for the approval of the PSP by the Institution*

The procedure for the approval or revision of the programmes provides for the verification of compliance with the basic requirements of the Standards by the Institution's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU).

Study Programme Compliance

I.   Findings

This PSP is a bi-departmental effort between the Educational Sciences and Social Work Department with the Management and Economics Sciences Department at the University of Patras. The area of focus and study aims for the promotion of scientific knowledge and in the contribution of research in the domain of career counselling and lifelong education. Additionally, the aim is also in the education and training of specialised professionals, who have the skills and knowledge to provide guidance and support in current trends and practices in career counselling and lifelong education (the latter is also the title of the programme).

Graduates of the programme are expected to exhibit skills and knowledge in such areas of expertise that include a) career counselling as it pertains to career paths; b) professional evaluation and utilisation of psychometric tools; c) planning, implementation, and evaluation of counselling services within the domain of lifelong education, as well in spaces of typical and atypical education; and d) working with people and groups threatened from social exclusion. It follows that graduates can seek employment in a variety of community educational centres, services and organisations--both public and private--that offer professional counselling to employed and unemployed people, and vulnerable individuals.

As specified in the documentation reviewed, the design of the programme is based on the premise that there is a need for a PSP with such a sharp focus in the domain of postgraduate education, especially as it relates to counselling and career planning. The programme designers point out that it is the interdisciplinary nature, as well as the collaboration between the Departments of education and management/economics that make it unique.

The programme structure and learning outcomes are in accordance with similar existing international programmes, and they adhere to the criteria set by international organisations of the career counselling field. The PSP is a three (3) semester, 90 ECTS, 30 ECTS per semester, Greek language programme, but students are given the option to attend part-time and matriculate within six (6) semesters. It is a combined learning mode programme, with a 70% of in-person attendance, and 30% remote learning attendance. Attendance in each course is mandatory, but students can opt to not attend lectures, totalling of 20% each course. Coursework is devised such so that all students attend six (6) courses in the first semester; six (6) courses in the second semester; and two (2) courses in the third semester. The first semester courses centre around introduction to career counselling, research methodology and statistics, counselling for vulnerable people, and professional evaluation and psychometrics. In the second semester courses centre around new technologies in the related fields, development and evaluation of educational programmes, and professional choices. All courses are considered mandatory, including the third semester thesis course and the practical experience course, at 15 ECTS each.

The practical experience is supervised by university instructors.

For the 2025-2026 academic year, an upper limit of 30 students will be considered for admission, but thereafter up to 100 students may be admitted annually. The student to faculty ratio is 1:3, and an Academic Advisor will be assigned for every five (5) students, ensuring ample opportunities for individualised and group meetings, both at in-person as well as remote sessions. The tuition for the three semesters is 2.700€.

The programme is designed such that practical applications and interdisciplinary/theoretical understandings are intertwined, so that students engage in innovative and critical thinking and are guided by group-based solutions on common issues. Similarly, a variety of evaluation procedures are used, including quizzes, research papers, oral presentations, and guided cooperative/group activities. Students are encouraged to author papers and related work and thus participate in academic conferences and publications. Moreover, in the third semester students are to produce a thesis on a topic that has been approved by faculty. This is to be presented in an appropriate place and time, a major nexus between teaching and inquiry that would also ultimately become public in conferences or journals. Also in the third semester, students are placed in various centres that have been selected by the programme to complete their practical experience, for which students submit a written self-reflective paper analysing the activities they developed, the methodological approach used, and the issues and difficulties that arose. The University instructors conduct the supervision of students in the field and meet on a regular basis in groups and individually to discuss and reflect on issues relevant to the community centre and the University coursework completed.

II.   Analysis

Admirable work and pointed research have been conducted by the faculty and administrative teams of the Educational Sciences and Social Work Department along with the Management and Economics Sciences Department at the University of Patras, to design and provide a very detailed and thoughtful proposal. Interestingly, the Career Counselling and Lifelong Education postgraduate programme appears to not add substantively to the field in the University system of the country, and as indicated in the documents provided, there are a few similar or overlapping programmes in the country, hence it may be that this notion warrants re- thinking about the programme feasibility and sustainability.

Nonetheless, the EEAP reviewed favourably most aspects of the programme as detailed in the documents provided, including the excellent faculty profiles, the excellent Student Guide, the detailed course descriptions, and the excellent admission requirements and flexibility allowed to prospective students, to name a few.

As the three-semester structure seems extremely tight in terms of student time commitments, it may be worth examining a four-semester timeline in order to envelop the following across the time students spend at the University and in the field placements:

First, early immersion in the professional spaces in which graduates aspire to know and understand and be employed, demand that ample experiences, assignments, participant-observations (to mean, not mere observations) and on-site mentoring and evaluations by all mentors/University instructors take place. This is a tall order to be sure, but this would alleviate the crunch that appears to be difficult in the programme's third semester.

Theoretically, providing students with in-field experiences early on rather than at the end, affords them ample opportunities to not only become engaged with the domain specialists, but also confirm or disconfirm the academic/professional choice they have made.

Second, courses such as the research methodology and the course identifying concerns and examining the literature on vulnerable persons, seem to isolate these important topics rather than regard these as threaded throughout all courses. This may mean that some courses are co-taught by specialists in one or more fields and figuring out how to embed the critical aspects of these important topics in each of the twelve (12) courses. The most recent approaches to critically examining multi-textured issues rest with this blending of topics.

Third, the assessment of students in the twelve (12) courses may need refinement and clarity as to the rationale, for instance, for having 60% of some courses' grades rest on the final examination. Are there ways to re-imagine how that may or may not be beneficial for students? The supervision of students in the fieldwork component appears vague. Perhaps a tool ought to be designed, so that both the University instructor and the field mentor can use to evaluate the student's performance, and in an ideal world, the tool can be designed jointly, by mentors and instructors.

III.   Conclusions

Upon examination of this PSP, this committee, while it appreciates and understands the significance of the contributions of each Department and the important collaboration between them, it may be advisable to re-examine and re-evaluate the programme in either making a few important additions or omissions to the designed programme or re-evaluate the programme's feasibility and sustainability.

Panel Judgement

Principle 2: Design and Approval of New Postgraduate Study Programmes	
Fully compliant	
Substantially compliant	X
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

The EEAP recommends:

- Re-evaluate the three-semester time commitment, given the course load and time commitment for students across the three semesters.

- Explore the possibility of including critical themes, as well as early field practice opportunities across all courses and all semesters.

- Clarify the assessment procedures, so that these reflect more student-centred approaches and are not heavily reliant on final written examinations.

Principle 3: Regulations for Student Admission, Progression, Recognition of Postgraduate Studies, and certification

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD DEVELOP AND APPLY PUBLISHED REGULATIONS COVERING ALL ASPECTS AND PHASES OF STUDIES (ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, THESIS DRAFTING, RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION).

The Institution should develop and publish the internal regulations prescribed by law which, among other things, should regulate all issues of postgraduate studies from the beginning to the end of the studies.

Indicatively:

- *The students' admission procedures and the required supporting documents*

- *Student rights and obligations, and monitoring of student progression*

- *Internship issues, if applicable, and granting of scholarships*

- *The procedures and terms for the drafting of assignments and the thesis*

- *The procedure of award and recognition of degrees, the duration of studies, the conditions for progression and for the assurance of the progress of students in their studies*

- *The terms and conditions for enhancing student mobility*

In case that the PSP is offered through distance learning methods, the Institution should have in place a regulation for e-learning, including in particular the following issues:

- *Services of the Institution to support e-learning*

- *Methodology for the development and implementation of courses*

- *Ways of providing teaching and variety of teaching and assessment modes*

- *General standard of course structure*

- *Student support system*

- *Support of faculty/teachers with mandatory e-learning training for new staff members*

- *Technological infrastructures made available by the Institution*

- *Student identity confirmation system (student identity check, assignment and exam writing process, security and certification issues).*

- ❖ *The Institution should establish rules for the provision of appropriate access and for the assurance of the participation of students affected by disability, illness, and other special circumstances.*

- ❖ *Ethical issues, such as those concerning data protection, intellectual property rights and rules for protection against fraud are governed by the e-learning regulation.*

All the above must be made public within the context of the Student Guide.

Study Programme Compliance

I.   Findings

Student admission, duration of studies, student progression and mobility are clearly defined in the programme. The intended selection criteria for student admission are transparent and mainly based on the following: general grade of Bachelor degree, grade in undergraduate courses related to the subject of the PSP, performance in the thesis (if applicable at the undergraduate level), and any research or professional experience of the candidate in a related field.

The general structure of the programme applies to the ECTS system (90 ECTS in total), which allows easy transfer among European Universities, student mobility, and process of recognising the degree. Courses are taught in person and remotely with a corresponding percentage 70/30. The PSP "Career Counselling and Lifelong Education" is in Greek, but students can write their dissertation in Greek or English. New postgraduate students of the PSP will be supported with appropriate actions, including information on the Programme of Study, visits to the infrastructure, and orientation. For a more efficient and reliable guidance in seeking information on the operation of the University, the University of Patras has launched the pilot online system "Athena", of frequently asked questions about the academic community (https://athena.upatras.gr). In addition, the University of Patras has prepared a relevant guide that is available online (www.f.s.u.upatra.gr/students/freshmen/).

A grant mechanism is planned to encourage student recruitment. The Erasmus+ Programme provides student mobility, both for studies in Institutions of Higher Education, as well as for internships in different infrastructures abroad. Application and selection procedures are mentioned on the website of the Erasmus+ Foundation (www.upatras.gr/international-relations/erasmus/programmaerasmus/), as well as on the website of the Master's.

The Department will provide an Academic Advisor for each of the postgraduate students to advise the student during his/her studies. An official Study Guide clearly outlines the conditions for the realisation of the master's thesis (e.g., transparency in the process of awarding and examining the thesis, counselling, and guidance for the preparation of the thesis). Students will have regular communication with the coordinator of their thesis. The Committee of the Programme of Studies is appointed and consists of the faculty of the Department of Education Sciences and Social Work and the Department of Economics.

The evaluation process of teachers by students is also well defined. The initiation of the process of electronic completion of questionnaires is to be done during the 8th to 10th week of each semester, for students to have formed an opinion about the course and the teaching methods. The Internal Evaluation Committee of the Department OMEA is responsible for submitting the results obtained from students' questionnaires. Access to teachers' evaluation results is also granted to the Director of the PSP in the context of restructuring and/or improving the Postgraduate Study Programme.

A practical training is included in the Programme. The practical training is a compulsory course and will take place in the last semester. It is a valuable part of the programme, in developing job-specific and broader skills for the students. It has a duration of 300 hours.

II.   Analysis

The Department has established clear and detailed student admission procedures and supports for the smooth progression of their studies. The Programme effectively applies regulations that pertain to all aspects of students' admission, progression, recognition, and degree/certification award. Graduating students will be issued both a Diploma and its Supplement automatically and free of charge, immediately after the completion of their studies.

III.   Conclusions

Procedures concerning student admission, student mobility, and thesis realisation, are clearly presented, and are following the required European standards. Responsibilities for the implementation of these procedures are subject to a contractual distribution between the partner Departments. The structure of the PSP promotes the achievement of the target learning outcomes, but should also reflect on offering prerequisite courses for students that come from different scientific fields.

Panel Judgement

Principle 3: Regulations for Student Admission, Progression, Recognition of Postgraduate Studies, and certification	
Fully compliant	**X**
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations
The EEAP recommends:
- To establish prerequisite courses for the needs of students who come from different scientific fields.
- That the Department should identify future sources of funding for the programme and its structure, particularly regarding scholarships.

Principle 4: Teaching Staff of New Postgraduate Study Programmes

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ASSURE THEMSELVES OF THE LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS OF THEIR TEACHING STAFF, AND APPLY FAIR AND TRANSPARENT PROCESSES FOR THEIR RECRUITMENT, TRAINING, AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENT.

> *The Institution should attend to the adequacy and scientific competence of the teaching staff at the PSP, the appropriate staff-student ratio, the proper staff categories, the appropriate subject areas, the fair and objective recruitment process, the high research performance, the training, the staff development policy (including participation in mobility schemes, conferences, and educational leaves-as mandated by law).*
>
> *More specifically, the academic unit should set up and follow clear, transparent, and fair processes for the recruitment of properly qualified staff for the PSP and offer them conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching and research; offer opportunities and promote the professional development of the teaching staff; encourage scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research; encourage innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies; promote the increase of the volume and quality of the research output within the academic unit; follow quality assurance processes for all staff (with respect to attendance requirements, performance, self-assessment, training, etc.); develop policies to attract highly qualified academic staff.*

Study Programme Compliance

I.   Findings

The Vice-Rector of Academic Affairs and President of MODIP of the University of Patras Professor Venetis Ioannis, the Vice-Head of the Department Professor Nikolaou George, the Director of the PSP "Career Counselling and Lifelong Education" Professor Vassilopoulos Stephanos, the MODIP and the teaching staff presented and explained their vision and were willing to share with the EEAP all the documents and information that could make their work visible. A short overview of the PSP containing the academic profile, status, strengths and possible areas of concern, and the degree of compliance of the programme to the Standards for Quality Accreditation, were discussed.

The members of the EEAP visited different webpages of the PSP, the Department, and the University:

- https://careercounseling.upatras.gr/
- https://athena.upatras.gr/
- www.upatras.gr/international-relations/erasmus/programmaerasmus/

Moreover, the members of the EEAP studied the relevant documentation on roles, responsibilities, and performance of teaching staff members. The list of academics involved in the teaching of modules is satisfactory and includes academics of various specialisations. The PSP is planned to employ a total of 8 academics, in particular: members of Teaching Research Staff (ΔΕΠ), Special Educational Staff (ΕΕΠ), Laboratory Teaching Staff (ΕΔΙΠ) and Special Technical Laboratory Staff (ETEP) of the Department of Education Sciences and Social

Work and the Department of Economics, the Department or other Departments of the same or another Higher Education Institution. It is worth noting that the list of teachers will be updated depending on the requirements of the Programme and availability (Appendix A1).

It seems that the University of Patras gives great importance to the promotion and recognition of the research work of faculty members. The University developed the Alexandria application, which automatically collects data, such as number of papers, reports, h-index, g-index, in total, for the last year and for the last five years. This process is based on the automatic search of the relevant data of the faculty members from widespread, recognised, and valid bibliometric databases. Based on this process, the tables Alexandria 1.2.1-Google Scholar and Alexandria 1.2.1-Scopus present the publications of the Professors of the programme and their respective citations (Appendix A17).

In addition, the Rectorate of the University of Patras established in 2021 the Outstanding Publication Award, in order to highlight the primary importance that the University of Patras gives to basic and applied research aimed at promoting scientific and technological knowledge and (b) to recognise and reward every outstanding research project carried out at the University of Patras.

II. Analysis

The internal Quality Assurance Unit has formulated a document with regulations regarding the role and responsibilities of teaching staff.

Overall, employment regulations, staff policies and recruitment processes appear to be effective in achieving successful teaching and learning outcomes. There are clear provisions for the systematic evaluation of staff members. The regular evaluation of teaching staff by students is considered a strength, if appropriate action is taken based on the feedback received. Students believe that their opinions are taken into account. Moreover, there is a well-defined procedure for handling student complaints. However, some areas for improvement exist. On the other hand, there is a clear set of criteria and procedures for the selection and employment of teaching staff. Even though the full extent of the meritocratic procedures used for recruitment cannot be assessed, there is strong evidence to suggest that academics employed in the teaching of modules are highly competent and effective as instructors.

III. Conclusions

The processes used for the recruitment, training and further development of staff are specific and transparent. The PSP is supported by a satisfactory number of academics with different specialisations relevant to the content of teaching modules. The scientific competence of the teachers in the new Postgraduate Study Programme is proven by their CVs and their research work, as posted on the website of the PSP and by their performance reports.

They are specialised and possess relevant qualifications and teaching experience. Professional development opportunities exist, and teaching staff mobility is encouraged. The workload of teaching staff allows for engagement in research activities. Academics are involved in research activities which include publication of articles in academic journals and participation in academic conferences. In addition, there is close cooperation between academic staff and students in various research activities.

Specific mechanisms for the evaluation of staff members by students are used on a systematic basis. Areas for improvement include the provision of more professional development opportunities for teaching staff and a more clearly defined research strategy.

Panel Judgement

Principle 4: Teaching Staff of New Postgraduate Study Programmes	
Fully compliant	**X**
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

The EEAP recommends:

- Even though emphasis is placed on research and development, more can be done in terms of formulating a detailed research strategy for the PSP.
- The EEAP believes that there is a need to increase the performance of the teaching staff in scientific research, especially in internationally recognised journals by internationally recognised systems of scientific evaluation (e.g. Google Scholar, Scopus, web of Science, etc.).
- The Programme should consider ways of increasing the faculty's international scientific collaborations and mobility.

Principle 5: Learning Resources and Student Support

INSTITUTIONS SHOULD HAVE ADEQUATE FUNDING TO COVER THE TEACHING AND LEARNING NEEDS OF THE POSTGRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES. THEY SHOULD -ON THE ONE HAND- PROVIDE SATISFACTORY INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES FOR LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORT, AND- ON THE OTHER HAND- FACILITATE DIRECT ACCESS TO THEM BY ESTABLISHING INTERNAL RULES TO THIS END (E.G. LECTURE ROOMS, LABORATORIES, LIBRARIES, NETWORKS, CAREER AND SOCIAL POLICY SERVICES ETC.).

Institutions and their academic units must have sufficient resources and means, on a planned and long-term basis, to support learning and academic activity in general, so as to offer PSP students the best possible level of studies. The above means include facilities such as the necessary general and more specialised libraries and possibilities for access to electronic databases, study rooms, educational and scientific equipment, IT and communication services, support, and counselling services.

When allocating the available resources, the needs of all students must be taken into consideration (e.g., whether they are full-time or part-time students, employed and foreign students, students with disabilities), in addition to the shift towards student-centered learning and the adoption of flexible modes of learning and teaching. Support activities and facilities may be organised in various ways, depending on the Institutional context. However, the internal quality assurance proves -on the one hand- the quantity and quality of the available facilities and services, and -on the other hand- that students are aware of all available services.

In delivering support services, the role of support and administration staff is crucial and therefore this segment of staff needs to be qualified and have opportunities to develop its competences.

Study Programme Compliance

I.   Findings

Provision of Facilities for the Teaching and Learning Environment

The basic infrastructures that host the Programme's research and educational activities respond functionally to the needs of postgraduate students. The programme includes a seminar hall, seven large auditoriums, lecture halls and a laboratory-workshop for consulting, which are fully equipped. Moreover, students can use for free the gym of the Department. Additionally, the Programme grants free access to the Library and Information Centre of the

University of Patras and to a wide range of electronic and printed resources. Academic staff have reported easy accessibility to the digital library, databases, and IT infrastructure.

Funding

The needs of the academic and administrative operation of the PSP will be covered by tuition fees paid by its students. The Programme regarding the utilisation of tuition will provide the academic staff (depending on their hours of participation) the following options: to be paid for their teaching services, to buy books or computer equipment and to be partially or fully funded for attending conferences. Moreover, the Programme will grant scholarships with

social criteria to postgraduate students. Additionally, the administrative employees (of the Department's secretariat) will renew the equipment (PC, other equipment) that is useful for their work in the Department. Finally, the tuition fees will cover a part of the operational needs of the Department and will also be used for the promotion of the Programme through scientific events.

Range of Support Services

The Programme offers support services designed to meet the different needs of its students. Each service addresses specific aspects of student requirements, including student healthcare and psychological support, accessibility and social support for students who face medical or social problems, information about career and academic guidance with the aid of an Academic Advisor.

Awareness and Accessibility of Services

Academic staff agree that the services are generally user-friendly and easily accessible. Administrative staff, after the registration of students, assist them in order to get access to a wide range of services like webmail, e-class and assists them with technical issues through e-mail or telephone.

Administrative Staff for Support Services

Administrative staff are the main pillar of the administrative support for students, dealing with bureaucratic, operational or organisational issues of the Programme. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the Programme's administrative branches provide easy accessibility to a variety of services in order to meet its students' academic needs. Administrative staff are also responsible for the coordination of academic staff, maintenance of records, providing administrative assistance and implementation of the decisions by the Board.

Educational Platforms and Videoconferencing

The Programme fully utilises digital learning platforms like e-class (https://eclass.upatras.gr/) Moodle, Zoom and Microsoft Teams. Furthermore, through these platforms, academics will provide postgraduate students with additional educational materials, assign tasks, design, and implement assessment activities.

II.   Analysis

EEAP members examined carefully these findings and accentuated the Programme's commitment to providing crucial supporting services to its students. The wide range of support services indicates the Programme's dedication to its students' further evolution and development. Furthermore, the focus on the optimisation and enhancement of the available electronic resources, lines up with current and future educational needs, simplifying and granting access to fundamental material and knowledge significant for academic evolution.

III. Conclusions

In closing, the Programme displays a solid and robust determination and commitment to providing its students with a wide range of services, managed by committed and well-organised administrative departments and staff. Moreover, the Programme's services and infrastructure are well-developed, ensuring a conducive learning environment for postgraduate students. The honest commitment to further improvement and alignment with modern educational needs highlights the Programme's dedication to excellence in higher education.

Panel Judgement

Principle 5: Learning Resources and Student Support	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations
The EEAP has no further recommendations on Principle 5.

Principle 6: Initial Internal and External Evaluation and Monitoring of New Postgraduate Study Programmes

INSTITUTIONS AND ACADEMIC UNITS SHOULD HAVE IN PLACE AN INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM, FOR THE AUDIT, INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE NEW POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES, THUS ENSURING COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF THE PRESENT STANDARDS. ANY ACTIONS TAKEN IN THE ABOVE CONTEXT SHOULD BE COMMUNICATED TO ALL PARTIES CONCERNED.

The internal evaluation of the new PSP includes the assessment of the accreditation proposal, as well as the documentation in accordance with the Principles of the present Standards and the quality procedures of the Institution's Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS). The internal evaluation of new postgraduate study programmes also aims at maintaining the level of educational provision and creating a supportive and effective learning environment for students. The Institution, through its Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) and the corresponding academic units, organise and support the external evaluation procedures of the new PSP, according to the specific guidelines and directions provided by HAHE.

The above comprise the assessment of:

- *the objectives, content, and structure of the curriculum, the knowledge offered and the level of science and technology in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the PSP is up to date, according to the relevant documentation listed in the decisions of the pertinent bodies*

- *the entailed students' workload for the progression and completion of postgraduate studies*

- *the satisfaction of the students' expectations and needs in relation to the programme*

- *the learning environment, support services, and their fitness for purpose for the PSP in question*

Postgraduate study programmes are designed and established in accordance with the provisions of the Institution's internal regulations, involving students and other stakeholders.

Study Programme Compliance

I.   Findings

The University of Patras has an Internal Quality Assurance System (MODIP). The University, through MODIP and with the assistance of the Department of Education Sciences and Social Work and the Department of Economics, organises and supports the internal and external evaluation procedures of the new Postgraduate Programme "Career Counselling and Lifelong Education" after the decision of establishment No. 232/28.03.2024 and the meeting of the Senate. A working meeting with the Quality Assurance Unit MODIP for the information and planning of the internal evaluation has also been held. MODIP discussed the full file No. 64/27.05.2024 and, after carrying out the audit of the required data, sent comments on the contents of the file to the Department and drafted the explanatory report about development of an appropriate strategy for its operation.

The quality assurance and evaluation procedures of the PSP will continue to be carried out based on the process entitled "Internal Evaluation". The internal evaluation of a new PSP

includes the evaluation of the accreditation proposal of the Postgraduate Programme and documentation in accordance with the requirements of the HAHE standards. An annual internal evaluation report will be prepared by the Quality Assurance Committee and communicated to the Board of Directors, so that any modifications can be made to occur as soon as possible. The formal evaluation of the content of the courses by the students and the teaching in individual study modules will be obtained through anonymous questionnaires that will be distributed to students. The maintenance of academic standards and the management and enhancement of both procedures for quality assurance and control are the collective responsibility of the departments.

Furthermore, the External Evaluation of the PSP, will take place, through the MODIP, and the Department will organise and support the processes of the external evaluation of the new Postgraduate Programme in accordance with the specific instructions and guidelines of the University. Upon receipt of the final external evaluation of the Programme, the Curriculum Committee will study and endorse to the Assembly of the Department the findings and recommendations of the External Evaluation Committee. These findings will be discussed in specific meetings of both the OMEA, the Departments involved in the programme, and the Director for further reflection and possible actions that must be implemented. When the external evaluation of the PSP is completed and the accreditation report on the Programme is submitted, the OMEA of the Department together with the MODIP will ensure that the External Evaluation Committee's recommendations will be adopted and become the main axes of the implementation of quality assurance procedures.

II.   Analysis

The EEAP believes that the partners of the PSP have adopted mutually agreed procedures concerning the implementation of the curriculum and quality indicators of the entire programme and will focus on data collected through an evaluation form. The Programme will be regularly internally reviewed and revised, with the participation of students and faculty members. The information collected will be analysed and the programme will possibly be modified according to the internal and external evaluation data.

III.   Conclusions

The EEAP members confirmed through their review of the relative documents that the University of Patras and the Department of Education Sciences and Social Work have in place the competent bodies and mechanisms to regularly review essential aspects of the programme. Some of these aspects concern the objectives, content, and structure of the curriculum, knowledge offered and level of science and technology in the subject, to ensure the innovative character of the Programme.

Panel Judgement

Principle 6: Initial Internal and External Evaluation and Monitoring of New Postgraduate Study Programmes	
Fully compliant	X
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

Panel Recommendations

The EEAP recommends:

- That the Department is encouraged to obtain feedback concerning the new Programme formally from external stakeholders (e.g., employers, social agency directors) by operating an "external partners" committee.

- That the annual Internal Evaluation Reports, the monitoring indicators, and related results could be published on the website of the Department to facilitate the information procedure and the possibility of feedback to all interested parties.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS

I.   Features of Good Practice

1. The proposed Postgraduate Study Programme has been carefully and systematically planned and evidenced.
2. There is a clear, increasing and diversified need for such a Programme, which has also been taken into consideration.
3. Stakeholders are positive and committed to such a programme, with potential for extensive collaboration beyond the practical training placements.
4. The practical experience offered by the Programme is a major asset for students and their future career paths and opportunities.
5. The collaboration between two Departments maximises complementary expertise.
6. The maximum of 30 students for the first cohort will provide valuable experience before planning the second cohort.
7. There are mechanisms in place to offer holistic student support throughout the Programme.

II.   Areas of Weakness

1. The inclusion of the practical training and thesis in the third semester maybe challenging, both in terms of teacher workload and student growth (i.e., in contrast with practical training starting earlier or throughout the Programme).
2. To a similar effect, subsequent uptakes of up to 100 students annually may provide challenges in terms of staff/student ratio and applied learning.

III.   Recommendations for Follow-up Actions

The EEAP recommends:
1. A more focused SWOT analysis could inform the further planning or potential restructuring of aspects of the Programme.
2. The provision of practical training over a longer period than the third semester could be advantageous for staff and students. The time constraints in providing the current courses (topics) during the first and second semester may merit considering the addition of a fourth semester, especially if there is an indication that a large number of students request extension of their studies.
3. The formulation of a more targeted research strategy could help the better alignment between teaching and research, as well as highlight the strengths of the collaborating Departments and the PSP.

IV. Summary & Overall Assessment

The Principles where full compliance has been achieved are: **1,3,4,5,6**

The Principles where substantial compliance has been achieved are: **2**

The Principles where partial compliance has been achieved are: **None**

The Principles where failure of compliance was identified are: **None**

Overall Judgement	
Fully compliant	**X**
Substantially compliant	
Partially compliant	
Non-compliant	

The members of the External Evaluation & Accreditation Panel

Name and Surname

1. **Prof. Vostanis Panos** (Chair)

2. **Prof. Emeritus Gagatsis Athanasios**

3. **Prof. Emerita Katsarou Eleni**

4. **Assoc. Prof. Emerita Valavanidou-Ioannitou Georgia (Gina)**

5. **Mr. Boumpourekas Konstantinos**